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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes issues concerning supported employment for individuals with severe disabilities, based on discussions with seven groups concerned with improving the quality of supported employment. The paper outlines three strategic challenges facing supported employment: providing access to individual jobs for an increasing number of people, sustaining innovation and continuously improving quality, and creating ways to organize for future development. The paper notes the early success of supported employment and the need for new strategies to meet growing demand. It describes approaches to increasing the availability of individual employment support, identifies clear signs of accomplishment in supported employment, explores how supported employment can contribute to better quality of life, and presents techniques for increasing co-worker and employer support. The paper cites innovations that have moved the focus from the supported employee alone, to the employee and the job coach, and finally to the total set of social resources available. A self-evaluation checklist for job coaches and job developers to maintain direction in supported employment is provided. (JDD)

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perspectives
On Community Building
Discussion Report

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Working on...

A Survey of Emerging Issues in Supported Employment for People with Severe Disabilities

John O'Brien

October 1990

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perspectives

On Community Building

Discussion Report

Papers in the Perspectives on Community Building series summarize discussions of issues that concern those who are working to increase the presence and participation of people with developmental disabilities in the neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, and associations that constitute community life. Discussions include people with different interests and points of view: people with developmental disabilities, family members, people who provide and manage services, people who make policy and manage service systems, and others who work for stronger, more inclusive communities.

Discussion focuses on deepening understanding of an important theme and creating options for action rather than on making specific plans and decisions. The process emphasizes exploration of different perspectives on complex situations rather than on defining consensus positions.

Discussions usually happen as events in the context of change efforts; co-sponsors often schedule them as retreats, search conferences, or reflection days. Participants typically know at least some other group members, and some participants get involved in further planning and follow up after the meeting.

Material taken directly from meeting summaries is between the lines on pages that look like this

A facilitator and recorder guide the group's work: negotiating an agenda and discussion ground rules, managing the group process, and recording and summarizing the discussion. The recorder prepares and circulates a written summary from large graphic displays and audio-tapes made during the meeting. The summaries preserve participant's own words and images and organize their contributions around themes identified during the discussion. The Perspectives paper is developed from the meeting summary, from participant's comments on the summary, and sometimes from selections of other materials shared by group members.

Preparation of this paper was supported through a subcontract from The Center on Human Policy, Syracuse University for the Research & Training Center on Community Living. The Research & Training Center on Community living is supported through a cooperative agreement (Number H133B80048) between the National Institute on Disability & Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) and the University of Minnesota Institute on Community Integration. Members of the Center are encouraged to express their opinions; these do not necessarily represent the official position of NIDRR.

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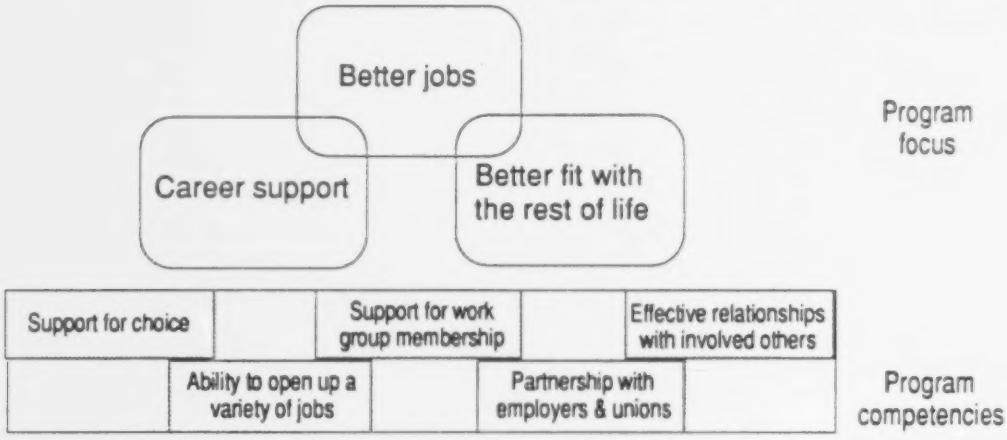
The rapidly evolving field of supported employment faces three strategic challenges as it matures.

ONE — Provide access to individual jobs for an increasing number of people.

TWO — Sustain innovation and continuously improve quality by engaging the issues summarized in the diagram below.

THREE — Create ways to organize for future development


Better jobs
Career support
Better fit with the rest of life
Program focus
Support for choice
Support for work group membership
Effective relationships with involved others
Ability to open up a variety of jobs
Partnership with employers & unions
Program competencies

This survey of issues arises from discussions with seven groups concerned with improving the quality of supported employment.* Discussion participants provided the content; I have analyzed their comments by drawing together and reflecting on themes that seem to me to be common across the discussions.

* Three groups -in Montana, Pennsylvania, and Vermont- included experienced job coaches and focused primarily their work. Four groups -in Georgia, Pennsylvania, Washington and Wisconsin included advocates for people with disabilities, supported employment staff, and service system administrators. Four groups met for two days, two groups met for one day, and one group met for four hours.

Thanks

The people whose comments and perspectives shaped this survey demonstrate a high level of commitment to an important social change. Their practical wisdom and willingness to confront the contradictions and problems inherent in learning to do new things for people with disabilities made my work an instructive pleasure. Thanks to the organizers and participants in these meetings:

Vermont Retreat for Supported Employment Staff, March 1989

Montana Supported Employment Conference, Workshop on Integration, March 1989

Pennsylvania Retreat for Direct Service Workers in Supported Employment, September 1988

Pennsylvania State Task Force on Competitive Supported Employment Retreat, May 1989

Georgia MH/MR Division Strategic Planning Retreat for Supported Employment, April 1989

Ellensburg Conference on Employment, June 1989

Planning Day on the Future of Services in Dane County, Wisconsin April, 1990

Washington Conference on Supported Employment in Mental Health, May 1990

Early Success & Growing Demand Call for New Strategies

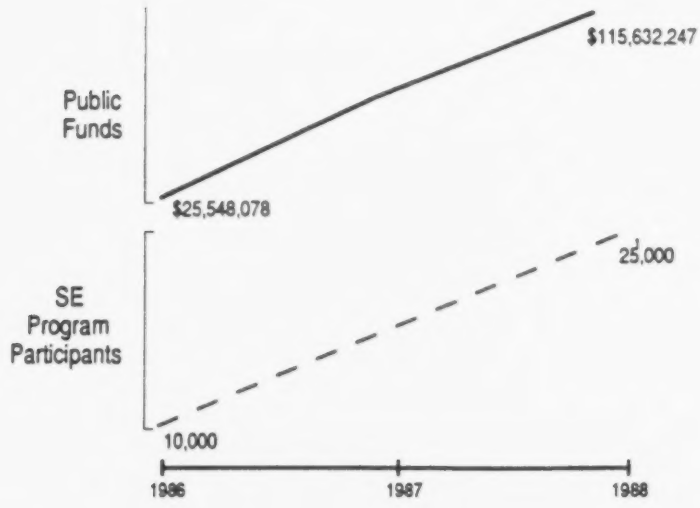
Supported employment has grown rapidly since arising on the federal agenda in the mid-1980's and now holds a central place in discussions about future services for people with developmental disabilities. With opportunity and assistance, thousands of people defined by professional evaluators as unable to ever work refute low expectations as they pick up their paychecks. Their success —and the success of program staff, employers, and co-workers— justifies continuing effort to convert present investments in congregate day services to individual supported employment and to offer employment support to the growing numbers of people waiting for day services. Their success also raises issues that require new strategies which allow more people access to supported employment while incorporating and extending the rapid learning occurring among innovative supported employment practitioners.

"We must develop and implement comprehensive employment program for persons with disabilities that emphasizes our commitment to meaningful work, in an integrated setting, for equitable pay, in an atmosphere of job and support security, with the opportunity for relationships for all adults, regardless of type or severity of disability..."

– Minnesota Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities (1989). *The heart of community is inclusion... 1990 Report*. St Paul.

Since 1986, investment in federally sponsored supported employment has multiplied x4.5 & the number of participants has multiplied x2.5.

The challenge of rapid growth: extend opportunities while continuing to innovate



Kregel, J., Wehman, P. & West, M. (1989). Policy development & public expenditures in supported employment: Current strategies to promote statewide systems change. *JASH, 14*, 283-292.

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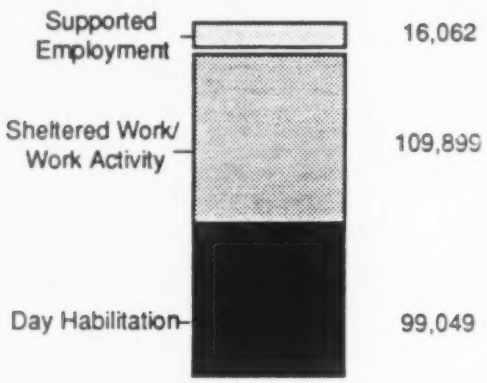
STRATEGIC CHALLENGE ONE

Access to individual jobs for increasing numbers of people

Many people who could benefit from supported employment continue to attend congregate day services —in fiscal 1988, state MR/DD agencies served only 1 person in supported employment for every 13 people in day or work activity centers. Although reasonable people might disagree about whether every person now in a congregate setting would be as well or better off in supported employment, the obvious imbalance sets a clear direction.

In 1988, state MR/DD agencies served 13 people in congregate day services for each person in supported employment*

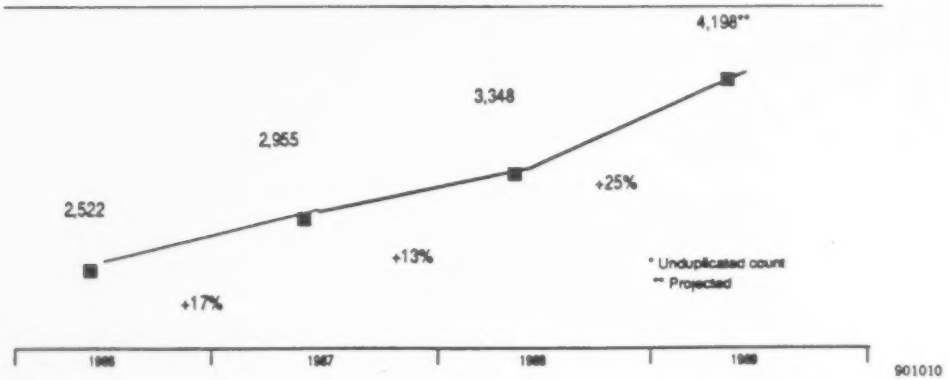
People now served in congregate settings need effective ways to move into supported employment



People now waiting for day services need effective ways to move into supported employment.

Waiting lists for day services continue to rise and explicit demand for supported employment will increase as information and experience spreads among people now in school through local special education practice, transition planning, and parent training.

The rate of growth of waiting lists is rising for people now eligible for MR/DD Services**



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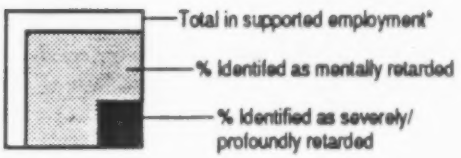
*Braddock, D., Hemp, R., Fujira, G., Bachelder, L., & Mitchell, D. (1990). *The state of the states in developmental disabilities*. Baltimore: Paul Brookes.

**Wisconsin DD Council, *1990 Plan*

People with disabilities other than mild or moderate mental retardation need greater access to supported employment.

Though people with severe physical disabilities, people with long term mental illness, people with head injuries, and people with severe/profound mental retardation have been successfully supported in employment, most supported employment jobs have been developed for people with mild or moderate mental retardation.



- According to a 27 state survey* done in 1988, about 72% of people supported to work are identified as mentally retarded, while 15 % are identified as having long term mental illness. Of those people identified as mentally retarded, about 55% are labeled mildly retarded, about 31% are labeled moderately retarded, and about 11% are labeled severely or profoundly retarded.
- Differing state criteria for adult service eligibility probably mean that existing waiting lists under represent the number of people who would benefit from supported employment.

People now receiving less individualized employment support need access to individual jobs

In addition to individual jobs, some supported employment programs provide work to groups of people with disabilities (usually eight or fewer people). Some programs organize people into mobile work crews, some develop enclaves on the premises of community businesses, and some set up small businesses. Though current Federal regulations define supported employment to include both individual and group job development, experience shows that supported individual jobs can offer higher wages, a wider choice of jobs, and more opportunities for personal social relationships with non-disabled people. So people now placed in groups deserve access to individualized supports.

Individual jobs are increasingly common. They can offer higher wages, more choice, & more chances for relationships with non-disabled co-workers

Type of Support	*%**	*Average hourly wage**
Individual job	65%	3.94
Enclave	20%	2.09
Work crew	6%	2.26
Small business	4%	

*Wehman, P., Kregel, J. & Shafer, M. (1989). *Emerging trends in the national supported employment initiative: A preliminary analysis of 27 states.* Richmond: VCU-RRTC on Supported Employment.

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Approaches to increasing availability of individual employment support

- Increase public funds

⇨ Organize people with disabilities, their families and other advocates, and service workers to expand available public funds. A broader coalition could result if all people with severe disabilities (or even all people identified as developmentally disabled under the current federal definition) were clearly eligible for needed long term employment support or if advocacy for greater funding were clearly joined to efforts to expand eligibility.

- Focus expenditures on support for individual jobs

⇨ Insure expenditure of available supported employment funds on individual jobs for people who need continuing support.

- Some programs managed staff uncertainty about the feasibility of supported employment by choosing the most able people they could find and screening out people with more apparent disabilities. Over time, this results in underdevelopment of services which move able people into competitive employment, excess cost from providing unnecessary support, and excess cost associated with an inflated standard ("If it cost us $x to serve these people, who are obviously more able, we will have to charge a lot more to serve people who are more severely disabled.")

"One reason to develop supported employment around individual jobs has to do with logic. If you organize around individuals and if, for some reason, it made sense to have a small group of people with disabilities work together, they can. If you organize around groups, its much, much harder to individualize"

–Vermont work group participant

- Some programs have applied the logic of readiness and developed a supported employment continuum which assigns people with more apparent disability to group supported employment options such as enclaves or work crews and reserves individual job support for people with greater apparent ability.* Over time this disadvantages people with more severe disabilities by reducing their chances of individualized support, reduces opportunities for staff to learn what it takes to support people with severe disabilities, and increases the likelihood that more able people will be over served.

- Managing these tendencies to distort focus and inflate cost by over serving is complex because apparent or professionally defined general level of ability doesn't necessarily predict the amount of paid support required for a particular person at a specific job. Some people with greater general ability seem to need greater levels of continuing support than others who are far more apparently disabled. The fit of person and job, the extent to which employers and co-workers adapt for the person, and the judgement of support workers make a significant difference to the type and duration of assistance necessary. Over time, a program clearly focused on individual jobs has a better chance of managing these issues than a program that assigns people to groups.

- Make consistent investments

⇨ Invest new money in individual supported employment rather than in group supported employment or sheltered workshops or work activity centers. Sustained, focused investment of money at the system's margin sends a clear message about future direction, generates less resistance –and thus requires less power– than reallocation strategies, offers incentive for existing agencies to add on supported employment programs, and paces the growth of supported employment.

* See Taylor, S. (1988). Caught in the continuum: A critical analysis of the principle of the least restrictive environment. *JASH, 13:1*, pp. 41-53.

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➲ Reinvest existing resources.

• Transform existing day programs

- Reorganize and transform the culture of existing day centers and sheltered workshops to provide individual supported work. Often referred to as "conversion," this process is complex, difficult to manage, and poorly understood. "Converting" as opposed to adding on a supported employment program or re-labeling continuing activities as "supported employment," requires committed, skilled leadership and time. Regional and state managers and advocates should invest in reducing the barriers to conversion, and encouraging and assisting those who choose to do it

• Take money from agencies that offer congregate programs and give it to agencies that support individual jobs

- Reallocate substantial public funds from day centers and sheltered workshops to agencies organized purposely to support individual employment. This approach generates substantial costs in reducing or closing existing agencies, developing new agencies, and managing the conflict which attends efforts to take money away from established organizations. It requires courage and skilled leadership from system administrators who hold sufficient power to push change against strong resistance.

• Redefine supported employment as support for individual jobs

Because regulatory language influences the climate and direction of change, re-definition of supported employment as a means to develop and support people with severe disabilities on individual jobs would strengthen conversion and reallocation efforts. Assuming adequate power to sustain the change, losses in support from agencies that favor congregation of people with disabilities could be outweighed by the effects of a tighter change focus.

• Improve schooling

➲ Increase schools' competency to provide young adults with relevant vocational experience and training. This may somewhat reduce demands on supported employment staff time while it raises and re-directs expectations and demands on the adult service system. Increasing attention to systematic planning for transition of young adults from school to adult services provide a way for positive changes in either system to influence the other: more students with good vocational education and active parents press adult services to expand supported employment; more success with supported employment presses schools to provide more relevant educational experiences.

Increasing the availability of supported employment in a climate of strong competition for public funds will be difficult. Managing major change in direction, practice, and culture in multiple systems and agencies will be challenging. Meeting these strategic challenges while the basic technologies of supported employment continue to develop in unexpected directions in response to emerging dilemmas and opportunities will stretch the commitment and creativity of leaders at every level of the effort to support good jobs to all who want them, regardless of disability.

Guiding the Next Stage of Development - The Pennsylvania State Task Force on Competitive Supported Employment

In our nightmares...

- We fail to get strong local ownership, management, and funding. Supported employment becomes a conglomerate, run from the state level, by a task force of state bureaucrats.
- We get so fixated on process, forms, and data collection that we fail to solve the problem of how to encourage local flexibility and creativity. We set such detailed guidelines for proposals that applicants simply give us back what we said instead of doing the creative thinking that is necessary to make a real local change. Local projects become more and more rigid as they become bigger and bigger. People with severe disabilities get screened out or thrown out because they interfere with the smooth running of the system. Supported employment becomes institutionalized.
- Within the programs, low pay, inadequate support, and poor supervision leads to high job coach turnover and inadequate support to people on jobs. This undermines the confidence of people with disabilities and their families and drives costs up to the point that people conclude that supported employment isn't worth doing.
- The primary identification of supported employment projects with agencies that serve people with mental retardation puts off people with other disabilities. These agencies fail to rise to the challenge of real consumer control and treat the people they support paternalistically.
- Supported employment becomes just one more stop on the old continuum of day services. We fail to enlist local decision makers and providers in converting existing investments into a variety of integrated work opportunities. The only conversion we make is to add some words to people's language.
- Supported employment remains an elite activity. Our requirements encourage only large, established human service agencies to apply for our money. We don't go to employers or generic personnel and human resource agencies to learn what it would take to get them to themselves become supported employment projects. So the pattern of investment in 1996 will be essentially the same as it was in 1856: money goes into institutionalized, human services instead of into increasing community resources.

To avoid our nightmares we need to stretch ourselves, beginning with the questions we think about. What would we do if...

... we wanted employers to decide that it's possible and right to invest in employing people with severe disabilities without outside help or intermediary agencies?

... we wanted employers themselves to become providers of supported employment (recipients of our money)?

... we wanted to provide supported employment within businesses without outside job coaches?

... we wanted generic personnel and human resources firms to offer supported employment services?

... we wanted to increase local business funds invested in supported employment?

... we wanted supported employment services to be under the direct, immediate control of consumers (or their legal guardians)?

... we wanted to increase the variety and creativity of local project designs?

... we made many small grants ($25,000?) instead of fewer large ones?

... we wanted accountability without numbers?

... we had a single state agency responsible for supported employment, and all day services for people with severe disabilities regardless of their label?

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This summary of a strategic planning session sketches the issues in managing change toward individual supported employment from the perspective of managers of a large, state level, interagency initiative.

Elements of A Strategy for Development

➡ We need a more explicit and detailed strategy to **encourage local ownership, reinvestment of local human service funds, and conversion of existing local segregated programs.** We need to track how much local money is going into supported employment in addition to state dollars; to track how much decrease there is in local funding of segregated day programs; to develop case studies of the ways local programs are converting their resources; to change the incentives to make investment in segregated day services less attractive; and to increase expectations that the agencies we fund will use project money to leverage conversion if they also operate a segregated service.

➡ We need to increase the visibility of supported employment on the agendas of state agencies and organizations. It needs to be in the front of people's minds rather than a bit of what they work on. We need to put the efforts we fund in the context of other efforts relating to employment.

➡ We need a plan that includes multiple ways to sell supported employment. Several different audiences need information: employers, legislators, human service managers, county decision makers, parents, people with disabilities.... Each audience has its own concerns. We need to look at supported employment from the point of view of each audience and think about what kinds of information will make a real difference to them. We have human success stories (which are very powerful for many audiences) and data. We need to package the information to fit the needs and preferences of different groups. It is also important that we communicate our message locally, by local people. Our presentation of data and success stories needs to be available to and deliverable by local people, who may need some help with making their own plans to get the message out.

• We have justified high start up costs because the current projects are research and development labs for us. We need an explicit **plan for learning from and disseminating the learning of these projects** if this expenditure is to make sense. How can we transmit what one project learns to others? How do things we learn from the projects influence policy and budget decisions?

➡ The task force needs to discuss **how to support change** at the local and state levels.

- Change takes enthusiasm and encouragement; we need to acknowledge and carefully describe what has changed as well as identifying problems.

- Change takes clear direction; we need to make sure to keep focus on what we want for people rather than having all of our communication to people bogged down in process requirements. We also need to keep focus on people whose disabilities are truly severe enough to justify the high cost of supported employment to counter the drift toward increasing numbers by screening people out. We need to recognize that number quotas alone won't work: one task force member pointed out a strong positive relationship between the height of quotas a manager sets and the depth of crap a manager is given.

- Change threatens people; we need to be thoughtful about our use of criticism and blame of the system we are trying to replace and of the new projects.

- Change takes time. We need to decide on a reasonable development time for projects. This decision needs to balance a concern for the effect of high costs on the credibility of our effort with the time it really takes to get started and learn a new way to work. Some people say 18 to 24 months is a reasonable start up time for small businesses; will our funders see this time as a reasonable period to invest? How do we insure that projects are, in fact learning and costs are coming down without pushing project managers into an exclusively short term focus?

- Change efforts themselves must face environmental changes. The job market in many counties is very favorable now. How can we use good times to prepare for harder times ahead?

➡ We need to deal purposefully with turn over of task force membership so that new members develop an informed, personal interest in supported employment.

What are the signs of accomplishment in supported employment?

Innovators need a clear sense of what success looks like. And, when the pace of change picks up, innovators need to revise their direction statements. This is a summary of what leaders of the effort to convert Georgia's investment in mental retardation day services from activity centers to supported employment want for the people they support and for their communities. [To date, this work has been supported internally, without direct participation in funding from the federal system change initiative.]

Continuous improvement in the quality of people's jobs

- ➢ Increase wages
- ➢ Improve benefits (health insurance, bonuses, vacation, retirement, etc.).
  - Minimize loss of needed public benefits
  - Maximize employer offered benefits
- ➢ Increase skills that increase individual career options
- ➢ Increase skills that improve the worker's present work performance and increase enjoyment of the job
- ➢ Increase the choice of jobs available to each person, taking account of each person's individual:
  - Need to explore new job possibilities
  - Income requirements
  - Convenience factors
  - Expressions of career interest
- ➢ Minimize negative impacts of work on home and family life
- ➢ Develop and support jobs that offer workers positive roles
- ➢ Increase clarity about the person's interests, capacities, and preferences and increase confidence that the person can pursue personally important goals
- ➢ Increase opportunities for interaction with non-disabled workers: on the job, during meals and breaks, and after work.

Systematic development of local commitment to employment for people with severe disabilities

- ➢ Increase variety of businesses employing people with disabilities.
- ➢ Increase level of employer investment in employing people with disabilities (e.g. employer participation in paying for job coaching).
- ➢ Increase co-worker investment in employment of people with disabilities
- ➢ Increase business initiated support for employment of people with severe disabilities (e.g. business group lobbying for supported employment funding)
- ➢ Increase the variety of jobs people with disabilities do
- ➢ Increase opportunities for people with very severe disabilities to work
- ➢ Increase individualization and the influence that people with disabilities have over the kinds of jobs they do and the ways they are assisted
- ➢ Increase family member and advocate commitment to supported employment
- ➢ Increase staff competency
- ➢ Decrease local investment in segregated day services

STRATEGIC CHALLENGE TWO

Sustain innovation & **continuous improvement** of quality.

As the number of people supported to work increases, demand for supported employment grows. As experience with supported employment deepens, initial understandings of quality give way to new questions. Issues of quality multiply as staff who work closely with people with severe disabilities get to know them and in ways that let individual identities emerge. New knowledge invalidates the stereotypes that previously justified congregating people so that they could "get ready to work" in company with others of "the same level [of disability]." The question that initially defined supported employment quality was: *Is the person earning a wage in a setting other than a typical day program?* A new generation of concerns extends this question. Continuous improvement in quality means more than learning to answer the initial question better and better. Continuous improvement means innovation in response to new problems and opportunities. These new issues flower from initial success.

What are the limits of supported employment?

Widespread initial success demonstrates the terrible extent to which typical practice underestimated the ability of people with severe disabilities to work and the willingness of employers to hire them. One senior job coach –a person who has worked in supported employment for six years– captured a vital lesson of the beginning like this, *"When I moved out of the day center, I thought the hard part would be finding people jobs and teaching them how to do them. That has sometimes been challenging, but I found out that the hardest thing was deciding to try. Each time we have moved to a new 'level' of disability, I have the same worry and make the same discovery: overcoming the inertia and getting started is hardest.* " She then went on to define the next issue, *"We've built up a lot of justified confidence. I wonder who will show us the limits. Who will show us that they are too severely disabled to benefit from a chance to work. And I wonder what we'll do then."*

Confusion of language complicates understanding this issue. What "severe disability" means depends on who speaks. Supported employment programs often adopt the convention of vocational rehabilitation staff and refer to anyone who has a low probability of independent employment after time limited inter-

vention as severely disabled. This usage breaks up a damaging stereotype every time it motivates workers to develop a job for someone who has been denied opportunity because of the stereotype. But there remain people as yet untouched by supported employment because of the extent of their apparent inabilities. These people deserve careful consideration by others who are willing to actively and critically test every preconception, including both the prejudiced belief that work is impossible or meaningless for them and the reforming assumption that every adult can and should work for wages.* All we can be sure of is that the answer for people with profound disabilities will not be found back in typical day services.

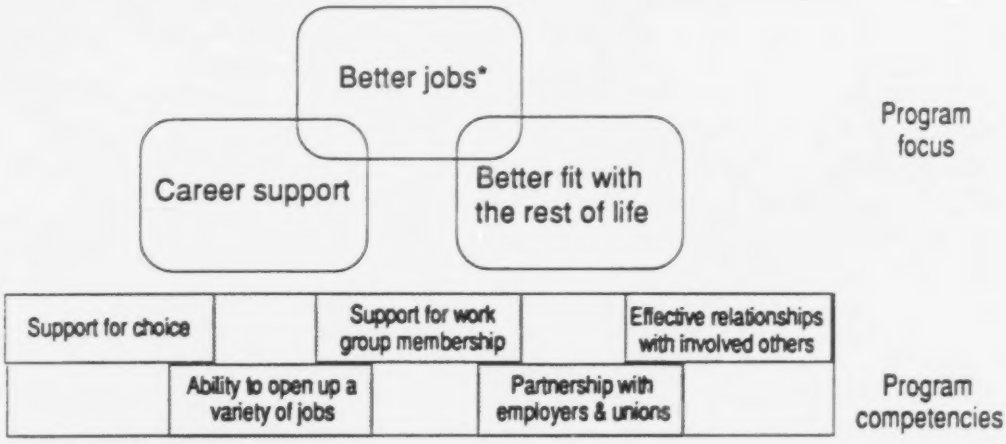
"...[For people with the most severe disabilities] we must aspire to a useful activity and presence that is valued for its social contribution, not penalized for its economic limitations."

–Diane & Phil Ferguson*

Increasing the contribution of supported employment to better quality of life

Once people with severe disabilities demonstrate their capacity to work, focus can shift to the quality of working life and the contribution of satisfactory work to better community life.

Themes in improving supported employment quality


Better jobs*
Career support
Better fit with the rest of life
Program focus
Support for choice
Support for work group membership
Effective relationships with involved others
Ability to open up a variety of jobs
Partnership with employers & unions
Program competencies

* Better jobs offer...

- Safe, fair working conditions
- Good wages & benefits
- Workgroup membership
- Opportunity to develop & use skills
- Security
- Chance for advancement
- Positive role

Some people wonder if these themes ask too much or impose unwanted values on people with severe disabilities. One job coach comments, *"My sister is a union leader. These are the kinds of issues she and her members work on. These are the issues I want*

*See Ferguson, D. & Ferguson, P. (1986). "The new Victors: A progressive policy analysis of work reform for people with very severe handicaps." *Mental Retardation, 24,6* pp. 331-338.

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our agency to address for me. Why should I want less for the people we work for?" A job developer observes, *"These are very ambitious ideals. But they are important to reach for. Why aim low? As long as nobody makes them into requirements and writes regulations and has inspectors coming around to write us up for not keeping up with the paperwork on them, we can grow from the challenge."* Another staff person says, *"Some people call these yuppie values. But they make sense for poor people too. Balancing your work with the rest of your life isn't just about having time to enjoy your sushi; its about maintaining the support of your family or keeping your medical benefits or keeping the roof over your head. And having a chance for advancement isn't just about buying your BMW; it's about responding to the desire I hear from lots of people with disabilities to have something more interesting and more responsible and better paid to do."*

Better jobs...

Supported employment programs develop better jobs when staff extend their repertoire and modify their jobs and program policies so that they can...

...more choices

➪ Offer better support for individual choice as a person's abilities and interests develop. This assumes that programs find ways to manage resource scarcity that allow them to stick with a person as the person moves from one job to the next. Programs have far less chance to develop the relationships necessary to support choice if they adopt a policy that offers a person a turn of one or two chances to keep a job before moving on to give another person a turn. To exercise more and better job choices, people with severe disabilities need staff who can...

- Listen to each person and those who know the person well to discover the kind of jobs the person is interested in and the type of working conditions that suit the person.
- Reflect on past job experiences with the person and others who have been involved. Find out what the person liked and didn't like and what the person did well and what the person did poorly in their own opinion and in the view of co-workers and supervisors. As one experienced job coach puts it, *"Losing a job is only a failure if you and the person don't learn anything from it."*
- Recognize when a job doesn't fit a person and help the person find a better job.
- Help the person with decision making by assisting the person and those whose support matters to specify what they want from a job, to judge benefits and costs, and to solve problems.

- Help the person negotiate conflicts by joining in thinking through what the person really wants from the conflict situation, assisting the person to plan and implement a way to resolve the conflict, and, if necessary, representing the person.
- Deal respectfully with people who have very limited experience, or little capacity to communicate, or many behaviors that compete with their developing and pursuing a work interest. Find out as much as possible about the person, work faithfully to be worthy of the person's trust, and engage the person in real work as a way to learn more about the person's interests and challenges.
- Apply the rapidly developing technologies of instruction and rehabilitation engineering to adapt jobs and increase people's ability to perform.
- Distinguish, in planning and budgeting, between the attendant services a person needs and the job support a person needs. People of superior ability may need personal assistance on the job due to severe physical disability. Even if the same person offers job coaching and attendant services, keeping the tasks conceptually distinct allows more accurate planning. The amount of job coaching necessary will typically decrease with instruction and co-worker support. The amount of attendant service needed is unlikely to decrease. Advocacy for attendant services needs to include good information about people's on the job needs.

A commitment to promoting choice in these ways makes the boundary between the person with a severe disability and the supported employment program fuzzier than some staff and administrators find comfortable. The kind of relationship that allows people with limited experience or ability to discover and communicate their interests sacrifices some of the businesslike focus which is possible when an agency sees its mission solely as getting people to work for a wage.

...greater variety of jobs

⇨ One limit on increasing people's choice is program capacity to develop a growing variety of jobs based on individual interests. Many supported employment programs have a pattern of job development similar to this national distribution of the types of jobs developed for those served until 1988 through the federal supported employment initiative:*

Cleaning & custodial	35%
Food service	23%
Manufacturing	12%
Clerical	3%

A new focus on widening the variety of jobs builds on the achievement of people with severe disabilities who perform entry level janitorial or food service jobs. It does not diminish them or devalue their contribution to look for more, different

*Wehman, P., Kregel, J. & Shafer, M. (1989). *Emerging trends in the national supported employment initiative: A preliminary analysis of 27 states.* Richmond: VCU-RRTC on Supported Employment.

kinds of jobs.

The design of a supported employment program, particularly the sequence of job development activities, makes a difference to the variety of options a program develops.

Some programs approach job development somewhat like corporate headhunters: they find employers with vacant jobs and undertake to find suitable people with disabilities to fill them. Though they are paid with human service funds rather than through employer commissions, they act as the employer's agent, perhaps even guaranteeing perfect job performance in return for access to a job.

Other programs begin with the individual and search for employers with the sort of jobs and working conditions that fit the person. They represent particular people with disabilities rather than the disabled workforce in general. This approach fits the pattern of personal assistance advocated by many people with severe physical disabilities.* The staff person acts as the person's assistant, doing for the person what the person would do for him or her self if not for the person's disability.

A program that starts by finding jobs and then looks for people with disabilities to fill them has a lower probability of fitting individual jobs to people than a program that starts from known individual interests. A program that looks for jobs first may become captive of a small number of employers and could fall into practices that reinforce the stereotype of "disabled jobs".

A program that acts as a job finder for individuals may be limited by staff capacity to develop working relationships with a growing number of employers and might expend more time per person supported to work.

To increase the variety of jobs available, innovators...

- Notice the kinds of job interests they discourage or re-channel into job paths that are more comfortable and familiar to them and break out of their set. One worker told of redirecting a young woman's interest in becoming a nurse into a job in a hospital laundry, which failed. Thinking about the failure, the staff person noticed that he wasn't listening because, "I knew it was unrealistic for her to go to nursing school." He asked about the person's particular interest in nursing and discovered a wish, based on her own experiences in hospital, " to listen to people who are lonely and scared and just keep them company and make them comfortable, not give them pills or shots or tell them what to do." This led to a new (for the hospital) job as a ward assistant, combining assistance with baths and meals with some housekeeping duties and assigned time to be a paid companion to selected hospital patients under the supervision of a nurse practitioner.

- Invest the time required to develop public sector jobs by establishing reasonable accommodations in civil service hiring and job description procedures.**

- Invest the time necessary to establish employee union commitment to supported employment.***

*See, Litvak, S., Zukas, H, & Heumann, J. (1987). *Attending to America: Personal assistance for independent living*. Berkeley: World Institute on Disability.

** See Rhodes, L. & Drum, C. (1989). Supported employment in the public sector: Procedural issues in implementation. *JASH, 14*, 3, pp. 197-204

***See, Washington Initiative for Supported Employment (1990). *Working people: Labor unions & supported employment*. Seattle: Author.

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- Ask for employer and co-worker collaboration in understanding and adapting jobs that are complex for supported employment staff to figure out.
- Look for ways to modify existing job descriptions to create new productive roles. Pay attention to ways a person with a disability could add value to the whole business rather than simply focusing on existing job vacancies.
- Look at the community as a whole and identify "the 10 best places to work around here." If these places don't yet include people with severe disabilities, notice whether staff have defined them as inapproachable and work on a plan to get in. If the 10 best places already have their share or people with severe disabilities, make a list of "the 20 best...."
- Make maximum use of personal contacts -including family contacts- to develop job leads for a person and to enlist champions for supported employment from among employers, managers, and workers.
- Follow up on failures. Enlist employers' help in learning from a person's job loss. Don't leave employers with undiscussed impressions. Otherwise, they may decide their business is generally unsuited for people with severe disabilities.
- Study and try out assisting a person using the procedures in What *color is your parachute* by Robert Bolles (annual edition at most bookstores from 10 Speed Press; the 1990 edition has an appendix on disability and employment)
- Think about this way of understanding the limits of job development, posed in a Vermont retreat for experienced staff. *"Maybe one limit to job development comes from us [staff] being unwilling to face and overcome the feeling of being ashamed of the people with disabilities we work for. If I feel ashamed of the person I'm supporting, I have to approach employers like a beggar. 'Please, Mr. Employer, take this damaged person off my hands.' I can't expect or negotiate for the best for the person. But we staff are supposed to have good attitudes. So I can't openly face and overcome my shame for the person with a disability. It's kind of a dirty secret."*

...workgroup membership

➪ Being a member of a workgroup has two dimensions: the employer recognizes the person as a full employee and co-workers accept the person as one of them. Being an employee carries some formal benefits in return for responsible work performance (such as eligibility for unemployment insurance, whatever benefit plan the employer offers, the opportunity to join a union if the workplace is organized). Being accepted among co-workers offers social benefits (such as informal help with tasks, aid in learning the ropes, and the personal supports of companionship).

Prejudice and simple unfamiliarity with severely disabled people as well as generations of failure to design accessible work

(continued on page 20)

"Working with individuals with disabilities has had a positive effect on the work environment. Managers in all areas have noticed the positive change in employee morale and have identified supported employment as a key factor in this change. Communication is essential in the continuing success of supported employment. If co-workers and supervisors are not informed and comfortable about working alongside a person with a disability, the concept cannot succeed."

-Gina Bagnariol, a Boeing Company employee who works part time as a job coach

If you want employment without integration...

Participants in a Montana work group for direct service staff involved in supported employment generated this list of specific ways to decrease the chances that a person with a severe disability will experience involvement and support from co-workers and employers. They wish to note that the list is a work of imagination and any similarity to actual practice in any place is purely coincidental.

✗ Right from the beginning, provide employers and co-workers with lots of details about what the person cannot do. Don't wait to see how a new environment will effect the person; prepare employers and co-workers for the worst.

✗ Don't involve the person with a disability in the interview. Keep the person away from the employer and co-workers until staff have made all the arrangements.

✗ Push "incentives" and certificates much harder than the person's ability as a reason to hire. This will accentuate the person's disability and difference in everyone's mind.

✗ Use lots of labels, acronyms, and jargon when talking with employers and co-workers so they have no idea what you are talking about. This will set you apart from them as the real specialist in dealing with whatever it is that's "wrong" with the person. It will also help them decide that whatever the person needs is too exotic for them to understand, much less do.

✗ Issue human service name tags to job coaches and have them wear them on the job. Be sure that job coaches dress really different from employees at job sites.

✗ Tell employers and co-workers, "If you want to tell the person anything, tell me and I'll pass it along." This is especially effective if employers and coworkers get the impression that the person will break down or blow up if someone other than the job coach speaks to them.

✗ Be clear to the person with a disability, "You can't do this job without the coach." The coach should teach the person to ask questions of the coach, saving them up for the coach's next visit if necessary. The coach should act hurt if the person does something independently or if the person asks a co-worker or supervisor for help or instructions.

✗ Arrange the job so that the person arrives and departs and has breaks and lunch at different times from co-workers.

✗ Have the person use a different system of time keeping than the other employees.

✗ Have the person arrive for work on a clearly marked "special" bus. Have the driver escort the person to the job if the person does not need assistance; have the driver leave the person at the curb if the person does need assistance.

✗ Pay no attention to trying to change ways the person's appearance or mannerisms may effect the willingness of co-workers and supervisors to get involved. (Call this "extinction" or "empowerment.")

✗ The coach should "model" the job continuously and give the person no opportunity to perform tasks for self. If a person does start to do the tasks, identify errors very quickly and push the person aside to "model" some more. Justify this as good instruction or, if that fails, as meeting employer expectations.

Increasing Employer & Co-worker Support

The same group identified these lessons from their work about how to increase the chances that people will be included.

✓ Stay out of the middle. Employers and co-workers are often uncomfortable or uncertain about how to relate to a person with a severe disability. This creates a push from the workplace side to put the job coach in the middle, between the person with a disability and others in the work place. The person with a disability may be uncomfortable with a new place and prefer to interact with someone from a familiar place. This creates a push from the disabled employee's side to put the job coach in the middle.

✓ In the job development process, make it clear to the employer and supervisor that they are the boss and that the person with a disability is their employee. Be sure everyone knows that the job coach's job is to assist, not to do the job. Identify the job coach as having specific, negotiated responsibilities, depending on the job and the person with disabilities, for...

... identifying ways the workplace or the job need to be adapted and providing necessary help with adaptations

...any training the person may need in addition to that usually available to new hires

...necessary help in dealing with problems when the people on the job can't work them out for themselves in a way that is satisfactory to everyone

... help in managing crises

...necessary help in getting oriented to the job and the workplace

✓ The purpose of the job coach's job is to provide the assistance necessary to the employer, the supervisor, co-workers, or the person with a disability to insure that the person experiences all the benefits of being a productive worker. The job coach can coach anybody; not just the person with a disability.

✓ For the job coach: don't just learn the job, learn the workplace. Don't just teach the job, teach the workplace. Find out how the routine offers people the chance for interaction with co-workers. Find out about how breaks, lunch, and before and after work rituals go. Work on getting to know co-worker and supervisors as people. Help the worker with a disability learn the workplace as well as the job.

✓ Be sure the job coach is very clear about the standard of performance that is acceptable; the ways performance problems are typically managed in the workplace; and work group norms about the flow and pace of work (which may be different in some important ways from employer specifications). Be sure the job coach doesn't act like a mother hen, expecting perfection or getting upset whenever the person makes an error.

✓ Encourage people with disabilities to talk to co-workers at appropriate times (remember to notice how and when people talk to each other while "on task'). If necessary, encourage co-worker to talk to the person with a disability.

✓ Be sure the person with a disability is included in staff meetings, routine staff training, workplace parties for employees, etc.

✓ Arrange transportation and work schedules to allow participation in breaks, lunch, and before and after work activities.

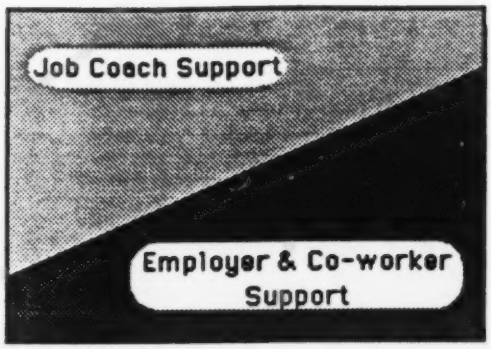
✓ The job coach can practice lots of different ways to get people to sit with their co-workers during lunch or get involved in break time activities.

✓ Think carefully on a person by person, job by job basis about how to provide employers, supervisors, and co-workers with information about the person and the effects of the person's disability on the job. Strive for clear, honest explanations in everyday language that communicate who the person is and what the person may need in the way of adaptations rather than labels or jargon about human service procedures.

✓ Identify common interests outside the workplace that the person with a disability share with co-workers and help people figure out ways to exchange things of interest. For example, a job coach discovered that a person and her co-worker shared an interest in horses and used this information to facilitate a break time conversation about horses between them. The job coach also helped the person with a disability identify a way to exchange things around the shared interest by encouraging her to loan her co-worker a horse magazine.

✓ Assist co-workers to act as mentors for the person with a disability. This is especially important when a non-disabled person might be uncomfortable about the idea that "a retarded person could do my job." Help co-workers with alternatives to bossiness, ignoring the person, or put downs.

✓ As co-workers get to know the person encourage contacts outside of work. Identify opportunities for co-workers to act as sponsors for people with disabilities in activities of mutual interest outside work (e.g. softball, JC's, etc.)



places and inhospitable insurance practices combine as barriers to workgroup membership. However supported employment practices either increase or decrease the chances people have for membership.

One common benefit of work group membership is that supervisors, training and employee assistance staff hired by the employer, and co-workers provide assistance that otherwise would have to be performed by supported employment staff. While very desirable, this is not the only reason to pursue workgroup membership for people with severe disabilities. A person should not have to depend on volunteer support for employment, even though an increasing number of people are supported primarily by their co-workers. The role of paid supported employment staff remains the provision of as much support as necessary in ways that leave room for employers and co-workers to contribute as much as possible.

Career support

➪ As a job becomes a more typical life experience for people with severe disabilities, the question of career arises. Because of their likely need for more intensive assistance around the time that they change jobs, programs that define themselves as supporting careers will serve people with severe disabilities better than programs that see their task simply as job placement.

Agencies with a narrow orientation to job placement frequently have trouble dealing positively with job failure and often run into policy and budget problems when a person who is successfully drawing a wage request help moving on to a job the person sees as more interesting. Career support agencies can purposefully help the person with a severe disability define career expectations as their staff assist the person to get and keep jobs in a job market where opportunities change along with individual preferences.

Career support does not need to be a separate service. In fact, given that it requires the kind of understanding that develops by working alongside a person, it might be very difficult for it to function apart from job development and support. Career support emerges as a consequence of sticking with people as circumstances change and continuing to support increasingly better fitting jobs.

Better fit between work and the rest of life

⇨ **Early efforts to support employment emphasized the benefits of having a job and attended almost exclusively to issues at the job site. Now many practitioners also deal with improving the contribution a job makes to the person's overall quality of life. To do this, staff learn a growing number of ways to...**

- Increase and protect people's income by...
  - Finding jobs that pay more than minimum wage and jobs that have the potential for greater earnings as a person's ability and seniority grow. Think about jobs that offer greater stability in times of economic downturn. An experienced job finder observes, *"It's turned out to be easier to find jobs that pay more and have better security and promotion opportunities from the start than it is to re-negotiate job conditions once people are established on jobs that offer less."*
  - Knowing how to work with the benefits systems a person relies on. Concern over the loss of needed benefits is a major concern of people with disabilities and their families. A staff person emphasizes, *"Knowing the benefits system is more than knowing what's written down. It's knowing the people who work in the social security office and the social services office. It's having a working relationship with them that lets you work on problems and share information; sometimes we've heard about some change that they haven't had time to read about -they have to trust you as a source of information too. It may not be strictly fair, but they seem to find more ways to work on issues since one of our staff got to know them and explained what we were up to."*
  - Dealing constructively with the fact that some families depend on the entitlements of a disabled member as an important and reliable part of their household income. Staff sometimes blame families for this because they believe that the benefit money should only be for the person with a disability, but blaming does far less good than problem solving.
  - Developing jobs that offer good employee benefits and making sure the person makes the most of available employee benefits.
- Assist people to find the right balance of time at work for them. Many people want to work more hours. It takes careful program management to keep the floor -defined in federal regulations as "at least 20 hours a week of paid employment-" from becoming the standard or from becoming a barrier to employment. Some people want to work fewer hours and some people, because of the extent of their disability don't have the stamina to work 20 hours from the start.
- Minimize the strain imposed on people's home and family life by their job. For example, a family that has organized its routine around a person's hours of day program attendance may find it difficult to accommodate a part time work schedule with irregular hours. While supported employment staff can't always fix these problems, they can make them the subject of problem solving.
- Attend to the people's life outside of work. Some people supported to work report that they enjoy their job but that they miss people they used to see daily in their day program. Finding ways to link people to recreational activities or to help people maintain important contacts reduce the potential costs of employment.

- **Work cooperatively with other service providers who assist the person. Unfortunately, many people supported to work live in facilities which act out very different assumptions about them. Many residential facilities restrict people unnecessarily and have unrealistically low expectations. Supported employment staff need to be assertive and skillful in negotiating differences with other providers.**

Some of these issues may seem tangential to the task of supporting people to work. However, they are not frills; they reflect the actual work a growing number of successful supported employment staff now do. As one job coach says, *"With time, I've gotten better at helping people do their jobs. But for many people the big threats to continued employment come in the hours outside the job. Theoretically this may be supposed to be the case manager's job or the residential staff's job. But for most of the people I support, case managers are usually too busy and many residential staff don't value the person's working much. I'm the one who knows the person best and has the most motivation to make it possible for the person to work; if I wait for it to happen the way it's supposed to, the person loses a job. So it gets harder to tell my job from the job of case manager or residential support worker. And we're beginning to have some turf problems with them."*

Partnership with employers

➲ As the comments on the facing page* suggest, trends currently influencing employers include:

- increased awareness of long term labor shortages
- growing recognition of that social responsibility can be compatible with good business
- changing notion of what's right, expressed in the Americans with Disabilities Act
- growing sense among employers that people with severe disabilities can make an important contribution to their businesses and a willingness to tell other employers about their experiences with supported employment as a positive attribute of their company.

These trends provide the opportunity to reframe supported employment as an opportunity and a reasonable social responsibility for employers. In this context, supported work staff define their job as assisting employers to do what employers have chosen to do rather than clinically assisting individual people with disabilities to meet employer standards. Such work may of course include directly assisting a worker with a disability. But, except for necessary personal assistance (attendant care), support aims to improve the work environment's capacity to support the person with a disability as much as to coach the person with a disability. To build partnership with employers...

*From, *Initiative: Business Leadership and Supported Employment.* Newsletter of the Washington Supported Employment Initiative. Winter, 1990 and Fall, 1990.

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"The general responsibility of business is to be a good corporate citizen. Under that umbrella you look at the options available and logical to your business. The government's responsibility is to supply what needs to be done for individuals that they can't accomplish for themselves or secure through their family support system.

The responsibility of the business sector is to continue to aggressively seek opportunities to contribute to the community of individuals at risk without making those activities contingent on government support. We need more actual initiative, rather than response, from the business sector -without government prodding.

At the bank, somebody had to introduce us to the concept that we could employ a person with a severe disability. It could have been another business, but it was the government. Now we're receiving help to train our own people to provide the support systems needed by individuals with disabilities. Making supported employment a reality isn't simply saying, 'raise your hand employer.' It's teaching us what needs to be done and letting us exercise the initiative to do it on our own."

- Bud Towsey, Executive Vice President
First Interstate Bank of Washington

"Supported employment has opened my eyes to the vast need for meaningful work for the thousands of people who have employable skills.

At First Interstate, we've made the transition from being totally dependent on the job coach to being much more involved in the training, coaching, and supervising of our employees with disabilities.

We have experienced significant reductions in turnover among our supported workforce. Supported employment has also improved morale among co-workers."

– Matt McTee, First Interstate Bank, Seattle

"Bruce Bird, our employee with disabilities, has taught us that what you do and what you look like are not important; who you are and how you treat others are what matters.

With an expected shortage of workers in our future the concept of supported employment will provide a new segment of the population to tap.

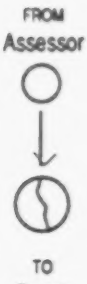
Jobs can be realigned, as we did in our organization, to take routine work and create jobs that a person with significant disabilities can do. That creates a significant increase in time for professional staff to do technical work"

- Vickie Porter, Employment Security Department, Olympia, WA

- **Be strategic in developing long term relationships with employers who have influence with other employers. With these employers, instead of simply asking for jobs, ask for involvement in building the company's capacity to employ a diverse workforce. Link them with other employers for joint exploration of ways to make supported employment work with their involvement.**
- **On every job, involve the employer in problem solving around the question, *What will it take for this person to be a successful employee here?* Then negotiate the role of the person, the employer, and the supported employment staff. Realize that an increasing number of employers recognize a duty to make reasonable accommodation to the disabilities of otherwise qualified employees.**
- **Organize private and public sector employers to guide the development and promotion of supported employment.**
- **The Washington Supported Employment Initiative has invested substantially and successfully in building partnership between employers and supported employment agencies. Contact them for information [14900 Interurban Ave. South, Suite 265, Seattle WA 98168 (206) 872-6348].**

What does it take to get the job done?

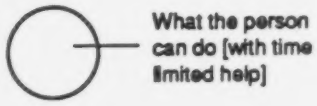
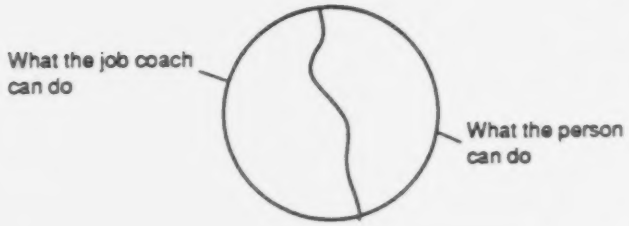
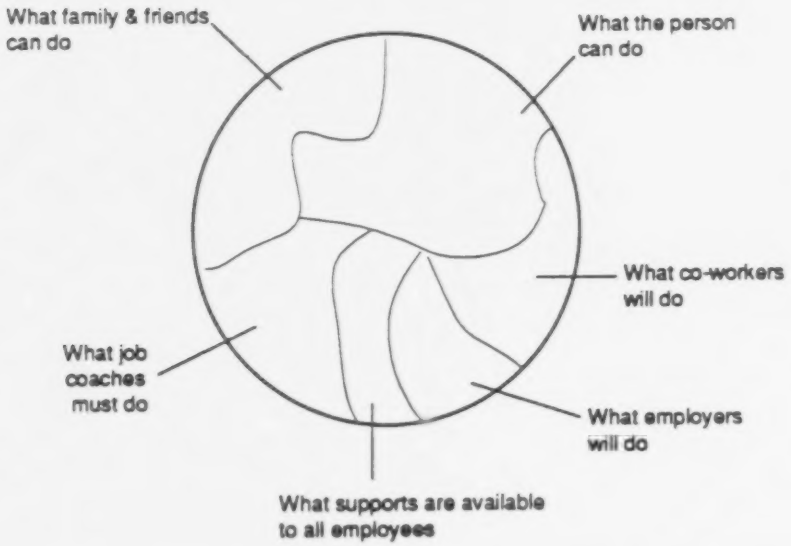
Supported employment develops by broadening the resources considered and organized to get a competent job done. The diagram on the facing page depicts two important transitions in the development of supported employment. In each section of the diagram, the circle represents the service perspective that frames the answer to the question, "What does it take to get the job done?" With each shift in focus, the circle gets larger and potential social resources grow more numerous and the ability of supported employment staff to build relationships and organize people becomes more important.



The first innovation moved the focus from the person alone to the person plus a skilled coach. Instead of simply assessing the job ability of the person alone, as the practitioners within the traditional continuum of day services do, supported employment practitioners consider what the person can do with the assistance of a job coach. This shift in focus allows many previously excluded people to work. It also redefines the service resource question and the most important staff function.

❑ When considering only the skills of the person with a disability, the number and variety of jobs developed depends on the number of individuals ready to go to work with minimal help

The Changing Focus of Supported Employment

Focus	Central resource question
I. On the **person alone**  	Who is ready to work?
II. On the **person and the job coach**  	How much help can the program afford to offer?
III. On the social **resources in the whole situation**  	How can we organize the resources available in order to do what it takes to support the person at work?

("We will place more people when the work preparation programs send us more people who are ready to work.") The key staff function is assessment: better assessments yield successful placements.

- ❑ When the focus includes assistance from a job coach, the number and variety of jobs developed depends on the number of staff hours and the training skill of the job coach. ("We will place more people, and people with more severe disabilities, when we can buy more hours of more skilled staff time.") The key staff function is training the person with a disability on the job: the better an agency's coaches can train, the more efficient the agency will be.

As supported employment agencies have grown within this first shift in focus, many have begun to learn on the job how to enlist co- worker support, make more effective relationships with family members and involved others, and strengthen their partnership with employers and unions. This learning sets the conditions for a second shift in focus to include not only the person's abilities and the job coaches abilities but the organized capacities of all of the available social resources including:

- What family, friends, and staff from other programs involved with the person can do to contribute to on the job success
- What the employer makes available to all employees to insure successful job performance (e.g. training, flexible scheduling, and employee assistance programs.
- Adaptations employers and supervisors are willing to make to accommodate a person's disability, including: workplace modification, job redesign, and more person specific supervision
- What co-workers are willing to do, including: acting as the person's mentor, modifying the ways they perform their jobs, and joining in efforts to plan and revise adaptations.

As the odd shaped sections on the diagram suggest, different people contribute different amounts and contributions shift over time. The more ably a person performs a particular job, the less others will need to accommodate, so the need for relevant training remains strong. But the job coach positions her or himself as the trainer or provider of other necessary support only if and when employers, supervisors, and co-workers are unwilling to train and support the person or unwilling to learn to do so with the job coach's help.

In this focus, the number and variety of jobs developed depends on how effectively available social resources are organized. The key staff function is discovering and orchestrating the capacity of the people in and around the job situation.

Those who see the focus on organizing available social resources as unrealistically idealistic should stop and think.

- Despite a common myth of individual performance, everyone's job success depends on the continuing cooperation of others. People who belong to high performing work teams get more done with greater satisfaction than people whose co-workers feud. People with strong support from family and friends can more confidently set and pursue goals than isolated people can.
- When employment support staff fall for the myth of independent performance two undesirable consequences may follow.
  - They may define jobs for people with disabilities as if there was no one else there. In fact they may routinely develop jobs that the person does alone (instead of developing such a job in response to individual preference), thus limiting opportunities for integration and choice.
  - Their options for support may polarize between an emphasis on training the person to do the whole job alone or having the job coach become the person's prosthesis. Swinging to the first pole limits the number of people who can have jobs by discriminating against people with greater continuing support needs. Swinging to the second pole reduces the number of people who can have jobs by tying up available job coach hours.

Those who see promoting cooperation among diverse people in addition to offering skillful teaching and job adaptation as demanding and difficult are correct.

The self-check list on the following pages demonstrates the emerging focus of the work of direct service workers in supported employment.

Maintaining Direction in Supported Employment
A Self-Check for Job Coaches & Job Developers

Participants in a Vermont Retreat for people who provide on-the-job support to people with disabilities identified the need for ways to maintain focus in their work. Workshop discussions identified benefits and costs to people involved in supported jobs, described sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in their jobs, defined uncertainties and dilemmas in their jobs, and made an agenda of necessary personal and program learning. Based on these discussions, this self-check list will allow job support staff to track their own focus.

Four major things should happen over time:

- The benefits that people with disabilities experience should increase.
- The costs to people with disabilities should decrease.
- The competence of the the job support person should increase.
- The program's competence should increase.

To use the self-check, review your work for the past month and decide which statements are true as of today. Consider what has improved and what has remained unchanged or gotten worse. Some areas (such as benefits may not change within one month, so something that stays the same from month to month may not indicate a problem.) Select at least one area to work on improving. Discuss your ideas for improvement with your co-workers and your supervisor.

Increased Benefits for People with Disabilities

_____ Wages have increased

_____ Benefits have increased

_____ Person's control of own funds increased

Person does more job tasks with less job coach assistance:

_____ more satisfactory performance with support naturally available to non-disabled co-workers

_____ increased ability to define & fix performance problems for self

_____ increased job support from supervisors, co-workers

_____ Person deals (more) effectively with social situations at work

Person is part of the work group:

_____ interacts with co-workers on the job, during breaks, during meals

_____ positive reputation as worker

_____ has friends at work

_____ Job is part of person's daily routine

_____ Person initiates new behaviors outside of work; feels "I can do more than I thought!"

_____ Person exhibits a clearer sense of purpose & future, what the person wants becomes more clear to others

_____ Important others in the person's life increase their expectations of what is possible for people; increase their support for the person's future

_____ Employer increases support for employment of people with disabilities

_____ Person chooses to work toward new or expanded job

_____ Service provider agencies increase support for employment of people with disabilities.

Decreased Costs to People with Disabilities

Person has adequate social support

_____ Person has necessary support to deal with emotional stresses of work

_____ Person has desired personal & group support

_____ Person has desired social involvement outside of work

_____ Person has convenient transportation to and from work

_____ Person has assistance to identify & deal with discriminatory practices at work

_____ Person has increased options to deal with benefits problems, if necessary

_____ Person has more effective support to deal with conflicts among those people the person relies on: parents; other services providers; others.

_____ Person has more effective support to deal with & learn from failures

Increased Personal Competence for Support Workers

_____ I am more effective in communicating with the different people involved in the person job success.

_____ My understanding of the person's job interests, motivators, & difficulties on the job has increased. I can represent the person more confidently.

My ability to support the person has increased; I have more options:

_____ improved ability to understand & deal with performance problems

_____ improved ability to teach when appropriate

_____ increased skill at accessing resources the person needs

_____ better ability to fade assistance

_____ increased capacity to negotiate necessary changes in service models, rules, requirements to fit person

_____ I have support to work through difficult situations. I do not feel isolated and afraid in making decisions.

_____ I am better able to negotiate the boundaries & requirements of my job with my supervisor. I don't feel exploited or put down by my agency.

_____ I understand the purposes of the paperwork I do.

_____ I have opportunities to learn what I need to know to improve my performance.

_____ I want to continue with my job.

Increased Program Capacity

_____ The program has increased the variety of jobs available to people

_____ The program has developed more jobs based on people's choices & preference

_____ More jobs pay above minimum wage

_____ More jobs offer people benefits

_____ More people are getting assistance with careers versus only entry level jobs

_____ More families support employment for people with disabilities

_____ More employer's support employment for people with disabilities

_____ More employers cooperate with alternative support arrangements involving greater use of business &

STRATEGIC CHALLENGE THREE

Organizing to promote and guide **future development**

The initial period of growth in supported employment has largely happened in the context of a systems change effort managed through the coordinated effort of federal and state administrators and university based researchers and technical assistants.

- Based on approaches developed in centers of applied behavioral research –especially the Specialized Training Program at the University of Oregon and the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center at Virginia Commonwealth University, federal administrators defined supported employment and made funds available to support a number of interagency projects involving collaboration among state vocational rehabilitation agencies, adult service agencies, and education agencies to convert from usual day services to supported work for people with severe disabilities.
- In addition to state conversion projects, federal innovation and technical assistance funds have been focused on assisting state level change toward supported employment.
- In some states –such as Connecticut, Vermont, and Washington, federal investment in supported employment extended and strengthened existing program commitments.
- Other states –such as Georgia, drew on the know-how and interest generated nationally to make changes without direct participation in the federal initiative.

Much of the first wave of change has come from the top down.

- Statewide strategies have developed in response to federal initiative, frequently because an in-state champion of supported employment mobilized action with the promise of some new funding and better coordination between vocational rehabilitation agencies and other state agencies.
- State agency and advocacy leaders have been recruited and guided through national education and technical assistance projects.
- Most local programs have developed in response to state plans. Local managers and staff have frequently been trained by technical assistants to implement one or another "model" of supported employment.
- Local and state performance has been documented and tracked quantitatively by university based researchers.

- ❑ **Frequent state and national conferences have linked strong face-to-face networks which quickly transmit information as they build a sense of national movement among their participants.**

This obviously successful initiative has created conditions that call for a new level of organization to guide future development. The pattern of implementing detailed models based on university sponsored demonstration projects is inadequate to the evolving situation:

- **The rapid rate of change leaves insufficient time to design and test model solutions to emerging questions. Practitioners can't wait for answers; so, researchers may offer informed opinions but not tested solutions.**
- **The parts of supported employment work under direct staff control –mostly instructional and job design technologies– can be improved by systematic staff training according to well defined protocols. But a growing part of the job calls for staff ability work cooperatively to develop opportunities and alliances and tailor make solutions to particular situations.**
- More and more knowledge arises from the experience of innovative practitioners.
- As partnership with employers and unions grows, supported employment practitioners encounter new perspectives and new methods from growing efforts to improve overall productivity.
- Decisions and plans for transforming existing programs take local commitment and skill to deal with the politics of competing interests as they play out over time. This process can be informed by case examples and lessons from other efforts. It can't be adequately guided by recipes from manuals or general roadmaps from technical assistants.

New forms of organization will develop as new information and new leaders arise from among the people employed through supported employment and their families and friends, from among practitioners, and from among involved employers, coworkers and union leaders. As new sources of ideas and influence join the leaders of the first phase of innovation, supported employment will fulfill its promise for growing numbers of employers and people with severe disabilities.